

[0033] In reality, the available prize distribution at each participating gaming machine is maintained after each award, as shown at block 322, even though a prize object is shown to be removed from the board. This process removes the awarded prize objects such that they are not available to be awarded for the remainder of the group gaming mode, but any particular prize amount due to a primary game outcome is awarded by either a prize award presented in primary display area 104, a prize amount presented with one or more prize objects awarded in secondary display area 58, or a combination of the two.

[0034] At block 324, the process ends the game round for the wager activation being presented, and resets the group game board for the winning gaming machine by returning all the non-awarded prize objects 73 (FIG. 2C) to their normal visible state. The group game boards at the remaining gaming machines in the set are maintained with the removed prize objects continuing to show that they have been taken.

[0035] Next at block 326 the process checks whether the group gaming mode has ended. In some embodiments, the group gaming mode is ended when all of the prize objects have been awarded. In other embodiments, the group gaming mode lasts for a designated time period controlled by the group gaming mode plugin service (FIG. 5). If the group gaming mode is ended, the process returns to block 304 where all the gaming machines in the set are returned to their normal individual play modes, receiving and processing wager activations with results presented as normal primary game results with possible bonus awards and respin awards. If the group gaming mode is not ended at block 326, the process returns to block 312 to process wager activations in the group mode. The check at block 326 typically applies to all participating gaming machines, such that if the group gaming mode is ended while a game outcome is being presented, the game outcome presentation is finished according to the group gaming mode process, and then all participating machines are returned to individual game mode.

[0036] FIG. 4 illustrates in block diagram form a software and data structure design for the electronic gaming machines and the group messaging mode messaging service which coordinates the group gaming mode and manages the game board during the group gaming mode. The contents of non-volatile memories 207 at each of the electronic gaming machines in the group. A primary storage drive holds the EGM operating system and a game engine and may include a prize generator for producing randomized game outcomes, either with a random number generator or by request to a gaming outcome server such as central determinant server 405 (FIG. 8). In this embodiment, the game engine is the Nitro™ game engine provided by Everi Games, Inc., which interacts with a Nitro game server for managing installed games, and various Nitro messaging services for managing group presentations and group mode gaming such as tournaments, group gaming modes like those herein, and other group game presentations across multiple gaming machines.

[0037] A gaming module storage drive, in this embodiment the Nitro Content drive, holds the software and data structures for providing particular games, embodied in a game module 202. As shown in the drawing, typically the game modules 202 is added to separate module storage drive than the drive which stores EGM game engine, but this is not limiting, and other security measures may instead be used.

This separated storage arrangement allows a configuration server to access the module storage drive for configuring the gaming machine.

[0038] Game module 202 includes at least first data describing game math for describing the mathematical response to random numbers or randomly generated prizes provided by the prize generator. The base or primary game math data in module 202 includes including bonus wager data and bonus payout data and definitions of the mathematical probabilities or operations to produce bonus game results based upon random numbers generated for game results. Game module 202 also base game code for executing the logic and rules of the primary game, which is preferably script code executed by a script engine portion of the game engine, but may in other embodiments be another type of program code such as executable code executed directly by the EGM processor. Game module 202 also includes base game media assets with digital media data including graphics and audio for all media features and sequences to be employed for executing the primary game results and any related media presentations such as the depicted bonus celebration graphics and audio.

[0039] Depicted below the base game code are bonus feature media assets and bonus feature code for executing bonus features such as bonus awards displayed in secondary display area 58, and respin awards, for example. Bonus features graphics and audio media are included and along with celebration graphics and audio for presenting bonus awards.

[0040] Also shown in game module 202 are group gaming mode media assets and group gaming mode code. The media assets include the group gaming mode graphics and audio, such as the prize object graphics and animations for presenting the game board of the group gaming mode. Celebration graphics and audio contain the media assets needed to present prize awards in the group gaming mode.

[0041] The group gaming mode code includes the executable code required to present the group gaming mode as described with respect to FIG. 3. The group gaming mode code interacts with a messaging plugin to manage the activation and deactivation of the group gaming mode, and to track the prize objects 72 presented on the group game board through messaging with the group gaming mode messaging service plugin 203.

[0042] In this embodiment, the group gaming mode messaging service plugin 203 is a service running on a nitro floor messaging server 404 (FIG. 8) or other suitable messaging server for coordinating group gaming activity. The messaging service plugin 203 includes messaging code for sending and receiving messages with messaging plugins on all gaming machines in a designated group. Messaging service plugin 203 also includes EGM participation tracking code for determining which gaming machines will be included in the set of gaming machines for each group gaming mode activation. Prize object tracking code tracks the state of prize objects in the game board, receiving messages indicating prize objects have been awarded, recording the state of the prize objects, and sending messages to the set of gaming machines that prize objects have been taken. Finally, messaging service plugin 203 includes mode change control code which determines when to activate and deactivate the group gaming mode, and sends messages to manage the